



NEWSRELEASE

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Agencies to sample interest in youth psychiatric facility

Two state agencies, recognizing the problems posed by having to send children to out-of-state psychiatric treatment facilities, are taking steps to find a remedy.

The departments of Corrections and Public Health and Human Services plan to issue a request for information on the possibility of developing an in-state psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth. The request is intended to measure interest in operating such a program that would ensure children needing psychiatric care can receive it close to home and near their families.

"The evidence shows that providing this care near loved ones improves the chances for successful treatment and opportunities for successful return to living in their communities and homes," said Joan Miles, DPHHS director. "Creating a treatment center in Montana also is expected to reduce the length of time that youth spend in treatment."

Although Montana has existing privately run psychiatric treatment facilities for youth, the problem is that they have the option of declining to accept a child and that leaves no option but to place the youth in a facility that may be hundreds of miles from family and friends.

"We think Montana should care for its own children in an environment that is the most beneficial for the kids," said Mike Ferriter, Corrections Department director. "And we think that environment is here in Montana, where we can easily monitor their treatment and progress close to home."

The request for information (RFI), to be issued later this month, is different than the more formal request for proposals, which spell out strict requirements for a project that are used to award a contract for services. The RFI is more a "testing-the-waters" process in advance of deciding whether to issue a request for proposals.

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The facility would treat mentally ill youth committed to the Corrections Department, placed on probation or in foster care, eligible for Medicaid or lacking adequate community or family support for their needs.

The RFI is an effort to identify parties that may be interested in creating and operating an in-state residential treatment program and how much such a service might cost. Based on current population trends and placements, both instate and out, we anticipate that the facility may serve approximately 20 youth who meet the criteria above. The request asks for information about experience in providing similar services, other treatment services offered, staff training and when a treatment program could begin operating. Interested parties also are asked to identify potential problems the state could face with the project and whether the state has determined all the major components needed to complete the project.

The request will include several conditions for the proposed treatment facility, including eligibility for Medicaid reimbursements, secure beds for adjudicated juveniles, school accreditation, a location near emergency medical and fire services, licensing by DPHHS, and staff training and education requirements.

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